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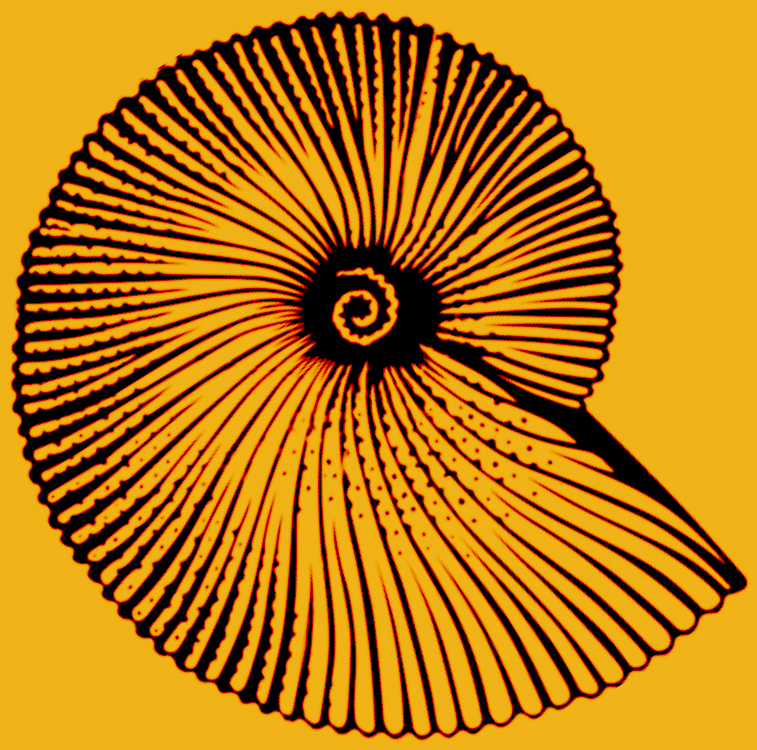

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CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

An Animal Who Writes Letters

The proper definition of a man is an animal who writes letters.

Lewis Carroll

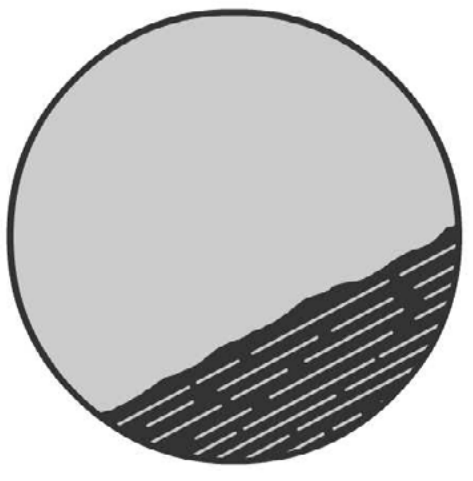
Last month, we dipped a toe into the sticky, sludgy pool of ideas that make the unstable ground for discussions about animality—what it means to be animal, what it means to be human, and how the long-standing distinctions between the two came to be taken for granted. Here, the historical basis for anthropocentrism is taken up again in a myriad of ways, some of them more abstract and poetic, others with a lucidity that fulfills itself by making everything else less clear. Keeping soft tread, we're moving away from an active, communicative relationship with our nonhuman counterparts; this issue of ANIMALITY keeps its cool, stays quiet, and allows for careful observation. But what we mean by careful might actually imply the opposite—for it's not about standing at a safe remove, allowing disinterestedness to creep in. Rather, what's careful about our looking requires a thoughtfulness the fathers of Western philosophy would undoubtedly scoff at. Which begs the question: How can we address the nonhuman carefully, thoughtfully, without falling back on the origins of thought? Next to other animals, can our rationale ever be truly self-explanatory, self-evident?

From observation to experimentation, our fear of losing grip on ourselves, on a self, has prevented humans from de-privileging the civilized. In order to break free of our pedagogical habits—and really, we may be the only caged animal with such obliviousness to our circumstances—the same mechanisms for understanding animality must change. Contemporary art holds ample potential in this respect, which our contributors this month are privy to. By making materiality material again, artists enable particular interpretive tools that better lend themselves to notions of nonhuman agency. In each of the texts to follow, the interpretation of artworks is revealed as a bridge between animals, bringing us down a peg, a little bit closer to the earth and that sticky, sludgy, primal mess. We like it here, where the authority of certain bodies dissolves into the fray; unexpectedly, there's no place to go but down. Or maybe, it's a matter of anywhere but up. The clouds have been tethered to the screen, and the demand for high pedestals, high culture, and high abstraction is dwindling. Given that we're in the business of the latter, we're not calling time of death —merely suggesting that the experience of being alive far outweighs that of being superior, and the face of criticality doesn't always have to look like a Greek statue.

Down the rabbit hole we go, stripped of old outfits and cast in fluorescent green light.

A Matter of Posture

ANNE MACMILLAN



Depending on the season, a varying amount of water will soak into the mountain. It may fall in abundance from the sky as rain, or it may be slowly released into the cracked rock as accumulated snow melts.

The water gradually permeates the Earth, committed to the infinite work of saturating a mountain, a lifetime of deepening and moving away from the surface. It warms as it descends the thermal gradient of the Earth, eager that it might be getting close to something.

And then, after hundreds of years of progress, its path is abruptly interrupted.

It meets a deep scar, an ancient snag—a thrust-fault which began forming over 140 million years ago by bending, folding, breaking, and stacking sedimentary sheets of rock. Unwillingly, the water is redirected, pressured to follow this buried geological suture that runs diagonally through the Earth. It is disoriented and hostile to be turned around and ushered back up the slope.

Although it felt like it had been approaching something, it never expected to find anything as concrete as the bottom of a mountain. It had explored in the belief of an open-ended abyss.

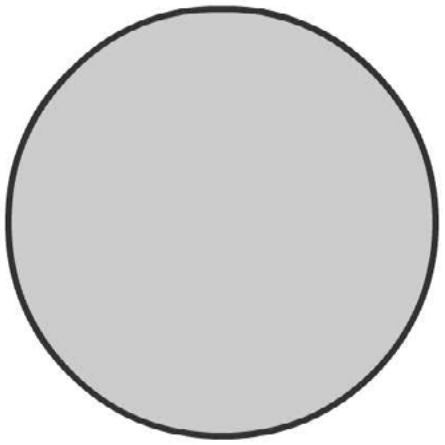
It was aggravated to find a bottom that slanted upward, inducing a sinister cycle. A return to the surface is an infuriating outcome after years of excavating layered depths.

On some level it must have known this was coming; its existence is inescapably cyclical. If it wasn't the fault line, it would eventually come across another system to break its deep meditation. With reclusive yearnings it reflects on the way it is handled by its surroundings, passed this way and that.

In quiet retaliation, the now hot water slowly eats away at the inside of the mountain, dissolving its minerals and absorbing gasses as it is pushed upwards through rock. On the way, bacteria are attracted to the mineral-rich water, the product of its fervency. They feast on it, stripping it of oxygen so that it is left stinking of rot.

It is seething and reeking when it confronts the brightness of the surface, a startling contact after centuries of dark, deep searching. It devises plans to get under the mountain, while the wind unceremoniously sweeps leaves that stick and scummy mats of algae settle on its face.

These waters form the critical habitat of a unique organism that is found nowhere else on Earth: Physella johnsoni, the Banff Springs Snail. This snail grows out of the very emergence of this frustrated water. It crawls close to the deep heat and feeds off of the microbial mats that form, scraping them with its dentated chitinous tongue. It absorbs and embodies the cyclic disposition of the water – itself just the size of a droplet.



It is a slowly moving, fortified drop. A soft body enclosed within hard layers.

It carries a smaller mountain on its back, secreted from its mantle in delicate eccentric layers. Its

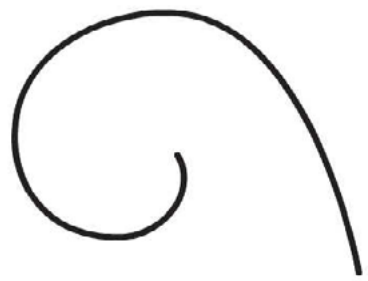
body more than fully occupies this twisting cavity, spilling out and then withdrawing to its cave-like aperture as it moves through the world. The snail may faintly recollect the suppressed thermal memories from the water that it absorbs; waters that have passed though the Earth's sedimentary layers now lap against faint striations in the shell. The inside of one mountain becomes the shell of another.

A drop that once moved within the mountain now attempts to get underneath it, to pick it up onto its shoulders, to transport it, to be in command of its own locomotion. This may be an attempt to make itself greater than its home, but the organism is far too entwined with its mountain to make a distinction. Its body and home are deeply and physically twisted into each other, and cannot separate. It cannot turn its back to its home, as a matter of posture.

Human researchers of the snail spend most of their time in a crouching position. Every four weeks for the past ten years, dedicated scientists return to the springs to count each and every one. Its species made human history by becoming the first mollusc to be classified as endangered. The fewest found were 50 snails, which accounted for the entire species' population.

In 1926, the snail was first officially named by malacologist William J. Clench, likely to honour his friend, naturalist Charles W. Johnson, who had encouraged him to pursue the study of mollusks.

Johnsoni was described using abstract concepts like "left" and "clockwise" to compare it to our own human orientation. With the apex of the shell pointing upwards, when facing you the well-rounded aperture is located on the left-hand side.



This is considered unusual, as most freshwater snails have the aperture on the right, and a dextral (counter-clockwise coiling) shell. Johnsoni's shell coils the wrong way, sinistrally, with whorls turning clockwise as it twists into a short spire.

Through their posture, researchers empathize with the snail, curving their spines, bending their knees, turning their chin toward their chest, and slowing their breath to steady themselves. They visually scour the ground before landing each foot, refraining from their normal gait and walking in slow, careful steps. They restrain their arms and legs, and curl their bodies to know the snail by momentarily assuming its cramped form. Eventually, however, their limbs must outstretch, bodies uncoil and stand upright, turning back after a long days' work.

Our human bodies, our limbs, allow us to handle and tread upon our surroundings, knowing it by manipulation. We are just as entwined as Johnsoni is with our surroundings, yet we create distance by extending limbs and omitting what we turn our back to. Our universe appears to us, formed by what we choose to attend to.

Both we and Johnsoni are dizzy organisms, moving slowly to compensate for our inability to escape our posture. The snail slows its pace at the idea of being apart from its home. We quickly move through the world, but then slow to a crawl at the moment we feel displaced from the centre of it.

Extensive efforts are taken to conserve the snail and its habitat, to keep it at arm's length, or within arm's-reach, of our attention. Bathing at the source of the natural springs is restricted because it is a threat to Johnsoni. The chemicals on our skin would contaminate the water, and we would disturb the fragile microbial mats where it feeds and lays eggs. Unable to soak our bodies in its warmth, we must settle to look longingly from a distance, and always amongst the lingering odour of rotten eggs. This penalty is too great for most tourists to endure—so we steal moments of contact with the hot water by illegally dipping our legs, arms, and hands into the steamy pools. Researchers track this activity annually; one year, there was upwards of 120,450 dipped limbs.

Perhaps this unsanctioned gesture of only partial immersion signals a confused desire to lose our limbs completely, to give up our ability to seize the world by hand and to trample it underfoot. We feel the heat distinguish our limbs from our core, we see our hands underwater, distorted by the ripples and tinted cyan.

Perhaps limb-dipping is a gesture to possess that fragility, to know it in an attempt to claim it. We reach in to take something away way with us, to unite ourselves with something distinct from ourselves, something that we currently lack.

We find ourselves psychologically twisted, as Johnsoni is physically. We both suffer from and indulge in a perceived separation from our environment.

Less water finds its ways into the mountain rock now, and less makes the journey back up to the surface. It makes sense that the desiccated empty husks of Johnsoni would be found scattered around the openings of the dried up springs. The water doesn't seem to be in the right places anymore, according to human analysis. With envy, we commit to conserving Johnsoni, an organism that exists in its home so viscerally.

ANNE MACMILLAN

is a Canadian artist from Nova Scotia. She is a Fulbright scholar, recently completing her masters degree at MIT. She holds a BFA from NSCAD University. In recent work, she investigates arrays of objects through such means as tracking, tracing, describing, and circling. Upcoming residencies include the Emerging Atlantic Artist Residency at the Banff Centre, Alberta, and La Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.

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IN BLACK WHITE

Explorations on *Animalario* by Nuria Cubas[1]

VANESSA BADAGLIACCA

Animalario is a video art project released by the Spanish artist and filmmaker Nuria Cubas (born in Madrid in 1984) between 2011 and 2012. Though technically dated by its release, the work is always in progress – or rather, always holds the possibility of being continued. Watching the chapters composing this video (of which there are currently thirteen) the first question that arises is, in the words of a famous John Berger's essay title, "Why look at animals?" In the essay, he remarks that in the origin story of man, "the first subject matter for painting was animal. Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal" (Berger 1980, 5). Which means that, as Berger argues,

> If the first metaphor was animal, it was because the essential relation between man and animal was metaphoric. Within that relation what the two terms—man and animal—shared in common revealed what differentiates them. And vice versa (Berger 1980, 5).

Berger considers that Aristotle's *History of Animals* had already highlighted quantitative and comparative differences between animal and man. It was a text of philosophical inquiry, in which, according to Michael Camille, "animals

are seen as useful objects of human nature and not as they appear in the Bestiary, as symbolic representations…" (Camille 1999, 358). Aristotle's *History of Animals* in fact acknowledged a common interest in the *Physiologus*, whose authorship was and is unknown. The frequently assumed Christian text, composed of animal fables, was written in Greek, translated into Latin and vernacular languages, and circulated all over Europe in the Middle Ages. Presumably written in Alexandria around the third century, this book, composed of between forty and forty-eight chapters in its first version, and afterwards expanded or emended in some parts, influenced the medieval imaginary. Despite its title, which could be translated as "the naturalist," the philologist Michael J. Curley points out that

> *Physiologus* was never intended to be a treatise on natural history. ... Nor did the word ... ever mean simply "the naturalist" as we understand the term ... but one who interpreted metaphysically, morally, and, finally, mystically the transcendent significance of the natural world (Curley 1979, xv).

It is, therefore, considered the basis of medieval bestiaries—a literary genre whose illustrations and anatomic description of animals and their behaviors mixed with fantastic and legendary tales. The subsequent fascination with exotic animals promoted the "collection" of animals—and the creation of zoological parks—as curiosities between the 16th and 19th centuries. The growth of this practice was twofold: on the one hand, it served to develop scientific investigation, while on the other hand functioned as a status symbol, since collectors were members of the wealthier classes and aristocracy.

The process enabled by Nuria Cubas in *Animalario* is significantly different, being neither biologic nor symbolic. Although composed by a filmic collection portraying animals in the place they live, Cubas' representation does not aim to document with scientific purposes or transfigure moral prescriptions, anecdotes, and humorous stories—nor does she attempt to offer a gaze on the animals as an exotic otherness. At the same time she appropriates the term "animalario," distancing it from its original meaning. According to the dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* (R.A.E.), "animalario" refers to the building containing animals destined to laboratory experiments. Conversely, Cubas' *Animalario* seems to knock down the walls of this building, or its theoretical implications, rather, to make space for human and non-human animals to observe and even confront each other.

Cubas indulges in a slow observation of animal behaviors, shape and physical characteristics that registers as distinct from any voyeuristic attempt of documenting animal species, as could happen during a journey on vacation. Rather, the viewer participates in the image, and is invited to put into action the repertoire of sounds owned by his or her aural memory while following the mute video, whose black and white awakens an atemporal imaginary of sounds. What is presented in Cubas' work, borrowing the title of a book by Italian philosopher Guido Ceronetti, is "the silence of the body" (Ceronetti 1979)—even if the body to which he referred is the human. By silencing the

sounds of non-human animals featured in *Animalario*, Cubas entices, or even accelerates, our projections, thoughts and feelings in the animals filmed.

Interestingly, this work was carried out at the same period in which the "animal turn" emerged in critical studies as a field of inquiry. After watching *Animalario* for the first time in June 2013, I asked the artist, through our ongoing email conversation, what questions had motivated her to film non-human animals in this particular way. It was her first time taking non-human animals as her subject; until that time she had filmed mostly people and often in domestic settings. She replied that her first attempt, when she started this project, was something for her basic and simple, and continued explaining as follows:

> What interested me in looking at the animals is that we all establish a comparative relationship with them, in other words, on the one hand we are conscious that they are "irrational" animals and this, apparently, distances them from us rational humans. On the other hand, we compare ourselves to them; for instance, if it seems to us that the ostrich's neck is exaggeratedly long it is because we are comparing his neck to ours. Or if the bear assumes one or another posture or if the horse's mane is shining a lot, we are always comparing them with our own size. […] This comparison occurs with an ostrich or a turkey, animals which are not even mammals, but in which we can see behaviors that mirror us. Certainly, this never happens in so direct a form with other elements from nature, like a tree or a stone. With an animal it is immediate, even when we talk about insects, immediate and super ancestral, placing that we are fascinated observing animals in all the stages of our life (perhaps because we also learn things about ourselves).[2]

In contrast to the standard set by the Physiologus, which became an exemplar for depicting animals through written

descriptions that provide transcendental meanings for the human, Cubas seeks to overcome the limitations of language as a document. Cubas refers to the process of learning enacted in the human by observing the non-human animal. The additional step she carries out, which is closely connected to the materiality of the device she uses – a video camera – is the possibility to achieve this knowledge through a personal confrontation with the animal. Therefore, what is at stake is not only the subject observed, but also the subject observer, questioning the animal by starting with the self.

Her statement relates the work directly to Haraway's notion of *entanglement*, describing "the inseparability of human and non-human worlds and of the 'naturecultures' that have evolved as a result." [3] Moreover, living in a zoo or a park, in the countryside or in a garden, with their eyes to the camera, these animals are offered—in the artist's gaze and post-production effects, with no prejudices—to be contemplated. As Jacques Derrida writes in his essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am," "The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there" (Derrida 2008, 29). Cubas' work seems to propose a new perspective on anthropomorphism, recalling the scholarship of Kari Weil, who notes:

> On the one hand, as a process of identification, the urge to anthropomorphize the experience of another, like the urge to empathize with that experience, risks becoming a form of narcissistic projection that erases boundaries of difference. On the other hand, as a feat of attention to another and of imagination regarding the other's perspective, this urge is what brings many of us to act on behalf of the perceived needs and desires of an other/animal (Weil 2012, 19).

Every non-human animal species is filmed separately and it is exactly this one-to-one relation-

ship between the viewer and the viewed that permits a deeper and engaged observation. In this sense, we can see a resemblance to Bill Viola's *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like* (1986), even though both pieces maintain evident differences as well. For instance, in the chapter "Egg Hatch" [4] the camera observes the entire process of a new life hatching, with her sounds; it transfers all the beauty of the moment and at the same time all the solitude of a birth. If *Animalario* seems to propose an approximation of the human and non-human animal, Bill Viola's video apparently points out differences and distances between them. According to Weil, *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like* "reminds us of the *what* that is at the foundation of every *who* and of the ways in which we humans try to distance ourselves from this *what*" (Weil 2012, 38).

Abstaining from a documentary report, with a result closer to a novel description filled by introspective random thoughts, Cubas is able to shape in the viewer an intimate relationship with what they see. In other words, she opens the path toward an activation of Berger's "first metaphor." Cubas also adds that, while conceiving this work, she was inspired by the notion of "becoming animal"—formulated by Deleuze and Guattari in their *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986)— which is always political, a sort of escape from cultural and social codes. For instance, Kafka's Gregor becomes an animal without losing his human condition. Therefore, the artist was intrigued by the hybridity that Kafka's character suggests, attempting to produce a similar effect in the spectator of *Animalario* and creating, in her words, "an intermediary point in which the person humanizes the animal observing human behaviors, while animalizing himself recognizing his animal behaviors." [5]

Moreover, I would argue that the varieties of animals filmed: "The ostrich," "the stag," and "the turkey" in Elche, on the Eastern Spanish coast; the "Latxas sheeps" and the cows in Euskadi, Northern Spain; "the Polar bear" in Chapultepec zoo in Mexico; and the horses in Verbania, north of Italy, induce the viewer to construct a mental map, an atlas across which the geography of non-human life and human life is distributed, changeable, in transition. Recalling again the idea of a "minor literature," following Deleuze and Guattari, *Animalario* also reveals an apparent deterritorialization or reconfiguration of space and time, since its main trait is not that of framing the animals filmed under any sort of systemic category, but rather creating an immediate mediation between human and non-human animals.

As a final remark on these explorations, intended to be left open for further ones, I want to underscore that the apparent quietness and slowness of *Animalario* in reality attempts to lower the level of a supposed human superiority, recovering an approximation to non-human animals that human beings have directed into two opposite and incompatible channels: conscious compassion on the one side, and sheer violence on the other. In this sense, the aesthetics characterizing this work appear tied to an ethics that permits us to see again what we think already know so well, to the astounding point of recognizing that we never really paid due attention to our animality.

Eventually, this point of view could be further approached through the challenging question posed by Pablo Neruda's verses in his *Book of Questions*, published posthumously in 1974. In one of the stanzas composing the poem, a succession of provocative questions about the equilibriums of nature—imbued with acute critiques to the political and social environment in and out of his native country in those years—paradoxically invert the human perspective on these issues. Imagining an expedition to the moon, Neruda suggests mice and turtles, instead of human beings to explore this far-away place. The concluding question seems to challenge the superiority of the human over the non-human animal, asking: "Couldn't the animals that engineer/hollows and tunnels/take charge of/these distant inspections?" [6]

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concluded her PhD in art history in April 2016, with a thesis entitled *Organic Materiality in the 20th Century Art. Plants and Animals (Human and Non-Human) from Representation to Materialisation*. Her research interests span between artistic practices and materiality, the relationship between contemporary art and its relationship with new materialisms, life sciences, geographies of life, and environmental issues.

Technologies of Pain: Animals & Anatomical Art

This paper is a condensed version of a presentation arranged with Amy Ratelle by KAPSULA, "Technologies of Pain: Animals and Anatomical Art," which took place in Toronto on April 29, 2016.

The ancient Greeks had two separate concepts for "life"—zoe and bios. As described by Giorgio Agamben, zoe refers to the "simple fact of living common to all living beings" (quoted in Van Den Hengel 2012, 2). Bios, on the other hand, is the "socially qualified life" (2) of (notably human) citizens that make up the politics of being alive. This split between one type of life and another discursively privileges the human at the expense of the animal and other life forms. Although the schism between zoe and bios has had lasting repercussions on our view of both non-human animals and medical science, "life" remains a shifty concept that has varied throughout history. Certainly the ancient Greeks had one view, but that view is not necessarily the same as early Christian philosophers, for example, and their view is distinct from Enlightenment philosophers, who of course differ greatly from contemporary posthuman thinkers and bioartists.

The boundary set between "being alive" (or not) and being considered "a citizen" (or not) has tremendous implications for the writing and implementation of laws. This

is especially significant for two reasons: first, the most common law has been situated in notions of property – what can be owned; and second, when we consider how, historically, this boundary between rational and irrational, zoe and bios, has been drawn and re-drawn to keep all non-human animals and certain humans outside of it, and more importantly outside the framework of human rights.

After the 1876 Anti-Vivisection Act made amateur experimentation illegal, animal experimentation was ultimately forced behind closed doors and into the hands of corporations and other medical institutions. The industry expanded to include using animals not only for testing, but as raw material—the 1970s saw the earliest advancements in recombinant DNA technology. Animals of course suffered greatly in the earliest experiments, conducted without anaesthetic; they suffer again through a new reframing of DNA – the most basic evidence of zoe, or bare life—as raw material for manipulation by humans. This is particularly troubling when such material crosses species boundaries (Gigliotti 2009, xvi). As Carol Gigliotti phrases it, "animals have become code" (xvii).

Yet, twentieth-century advances in science have also enabled a new field for cultural expression and exploration—the field of bioart—where animals, art and technology meet. Bioart can thus be defined as an art practice wherein human artists work with living tissue, organisms, bacteria, and other material composites of natural life using scientific processes (for example genetic engineering, tissue cultures/cultivation, and cloning). This field emerges from and critiques the long history of animal experimentation, opening spaces to ask challenging questions: about "human" as a singular (and superior) identity, when our own bodies are clearly microbiomes, colonized by other life forms; about the significance and importance of those other life forms; and about our responsibility to those life forms.

While certainly not the earliest instance of bio or transgenic art, Eduardo Kac's GFP Bunny is perhaps one of the most famous. In 2000, Kac announced his intention to adopt a genetically-modified rabbit created by the National Institute of Agronomic Research (France). The rabbit's DNA was combined with that of a phosphorescent jellyfish, and when illuminated under black light her eyes, skin, and nails glow green. Named "Alba" by Kac, she was created to interact with him in a replicated domestic space as part of an art exhibit.

A September 2000 article in the *Boston Globe* generated much media attention and public outcry over the project, and the Lab changed its mind. Alba was not released, and the exhibit did not go on as planned (nor could Kac bring her to his home in Chicago either), but the GFP Bunny was "out of the cage" – the merging of scientifically-created life forms and art remains in the public imagination, inspiring those working in cultural fields to harness the tools of biotechnology and bring them out from behind the closed doors of the laboratory.

Working in a similar vein, in 2004 Natalie Jeremijenko and Eugene Thacker published *Creative Biotechnology: A User's Manual*--a guide for lay audiences to engage with biotechnology in creative ways, making space for the "biotech hobbyist." The book includes instructions on where to purchase mice for experiments, or how to grow your own skin. As Joanna Zylinska points out, however, this is a "risky strategy" in a post-9/11 world, where governments remain on high alert for all kinds of threats, bioterrorism included (Zylinska 2009, 151).

The question remains, however, whether creating living organisms for art is ethical or not, given that they are usually destroyed when the exhibit is over. Arguably, there is equal, if not greater 'waste' in the medical industry, in terms of both lab animals and other living forms. Productively, bioart exhibits invite these conversations, such as in the Tissue Culture & Art Project's *Semi-Living Worry Dolls* (2000). These cultivated tissue forms borrow from the Guatemalan tradition of giving fabric worry dolls

to children, who are meant to confide in them and keep them under their pillows to absolve negative thoughts. The project is significant in its incorporation of what the artists call the "killing ritual"—where they release the tissue sculptures from their containers and allow the public to touch them, which results in tissue death. One of the artists, Oron Catts, explains:

> The killing only takes place when we reach a point when no one can take care of the semi-living any longer. The killing ritual can be seen as either the ultimate pitiless act, as an essential show of compassion; euthanasia of a living being that has no one to care for it, or just returning it to the cultural accepted state of "a sticky mess of lifeless bits of meat." It is important for us to be transparent in regard to the fate of the living art work at the end of the exhibition. It is also interesting to note that on some occasions, members of the public came to us after participating in the killing ritual and told us that only by killing the semi-living they believed that the work was actually alive (quoted in Quaranta 2004, n.pag).

In the history of Western philosophy, particularly the philosophy of science, the notion of what is life, what is alive, is a common thread in both political thought and art-making—both with traditional media and emerging forms of new media. Technological advancement often outpaces ethical considerations and the law, leaving both areas to catch up after the fact. However, I argue that while there is a danger of artists and cultural workers replicating the type of schisms between alive and not-alive that have formed the basis of so much of our political thought to date, work in this particular genre does crucially force public engagement with these deeply-rooted binaries between human and nonhuman. By making visible the raw material and matter of life, which we share with all other life forms, bioart holds the potential to challenge and even change our historically anthropocentric notions of human superiority.

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ALONG-SIDE IN-TERPRE-TATION V

ALISON COOLEY

As I begin this final column, I am turning around two disparate things that I feel confident have some tangential connection, mining the possibility of interpretation for thinking-with and linking together. So far, I can only call the connection between these two things a close relative of "ambiguity"—a precious trophy word of introductory postmodernism courses everywhere.

The first disparate thing is ambiguity's significance in dreaming. Returning from a recent trip to Montreal, to the School of Making Thinking's *Words & []* durational conference of art and thought (a weekend conference taking place over three days at the Darling Foundry, including eating and sleeping together in the space with presentations, performances and workshops at all hours), I was struck by a synchronousness between Freudian theory and contemporary science on dreams.

According to Robert Stickgold, a psychiatrist who studies dreaming at Harvard, only certain kinds of actions or events infiltrate dreams—not memories that are conscious or understood (what he calls "declarative memories") but "implicit memories," which are difficult to access consciously. Implicit memories are events or actions or thoughts ("weak associations," Stickgold says) that remain tickling your brain (Stickgold, 2000).

Following Stickgold's suit, I have been naming the things that fail to produce strong associations: the inarticulable, the undeclarative, the tentative, the spongey, the pussyfoot, the hedge, the pliable, the gestural, the allegorical, the ontological, the shrinking, the embodied, the repetitious, the ceaseless, the chewy, the pulsating, the exalted, the unintentional, the anomic, the missed step on the way down the stairs, the too-long handshake, the vapourousness of tact. These spirits live so well in artworks—and live equally well in dreams, because they're incalculable, stuck.

Stickgold's 1999 study traces the subliminal stickiness of Tetris, using the video game as a vehicle for studying what and how repetition, problem-solving, and being caught in the middle of something unsolvable do for dreams. Tetris, Stickgold's data confirms, remains sticky dream-matter not only for people with unimpeded memory formation, but also for people with amnesia (who do not properly form declarative memories). "One can only surmise," Stickgold concludes, "that during REM sleep more unpredictable, potentially valuable, but frequently useless, associations are tested and, when appropriate . . . strengthened" (Stickgold 2000).

And this is not such a far cry from Freud's methodology for studying dreaming; describing dream symbols as imperfect markers of content the dreamer had not yet solved or understood, he traced each symbol back through a series of free associations with his patients until the subliminal content revealed itself through the lateral actions of memory

(Freud 1980). I'm skeptical of Stickgold's research actually validating Freud's—one being a set of data, and the other a treatment methodology that makes several assumptions about how the difficulties we have processing information and memories might be resolved by working backwards through free association. But the parallel between the two intrigues me.

The second disparate thing is this: in the two minutes it took me to snap a picture of Fernando and Humberto Campana's *Cake Stool* in the relatively sparsely populated design galleries of the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, others approached to pay Instagram homage to this particular furniture beast. A slow creep of passers-by, linked only by the fact that something (what?) moved them to photograph the work.

The Campana brothers have developed an aesthetic producing luxury goods made from low materials—furniture made with scrap wood from São Paulo slums, for example, or this piece whose accumulated pieces resemble midway-game-prizes. The animacy of *Cake Stool* means something different than the Campana's other design works: there are eyes and faces, you are meant to recline on a pile of animal bodies, made to be cuddled and individuated. And while some are bears, raccoons, dogs (thoroughly domesticated), others are big cats—whose wildness is contained and distorted through their kitsch-value.

While I normally jump to claim that the animal is always a symbol or a stand-in, I find this chair difficult in that its symbolism is more about the inherent strangeness of commodity culture than about animals themselves. Is this what makes it Insta-grammable?

Vogue's 2014 listicle "10 Works of Art to Instagram in New York this Summer" ("don't pretend like you didn't spend more than an hour waiting at the Whitney just to snap that magical selfie at Yayoi Kusama's *Fireflies on the Water*") (Garcia 2014) attests to the cultural cachet of Instagramming artworks—the allure of translating the experiential to the small, square, filtered, and ultimately digestible format. But I recognize in it some fascination with the atmospheric, the unexpected, the absurd, the still, the untouchable, the unspeakable, the impatient, the stranger's Craiglist mirror, the longing, the artwork made of inarticulate parts—the ambiguities that live so well in analysis. They are replicating almost willfully in the culture of images around us. Reperformance and saturation persist as interpretative forms, in reverence and defiance—in work that trudges forward through the soggy bulk of the cloud and lives perpetually in translation back to tangible space.

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